

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 21358 301822Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9588

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

CDRSETAF VICENZA IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 21358

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETEL, MILL, IT

SUBJ: CONVERTING AFRTS TO NON-APPROPRIATED STATUS

REF: SECEF 9294 (DTG 230512Z NOV 77)

1. CONVERTING THE ARMED FORCES RADIO AND TELEVISION
SERVICE (AFRTS) FROM APPROPRIATED TO NON-APPROPRIATED
STATUS IS NOT FEASIBLE IN
ITALY. SEN (SOUTHERN EUROPEAN NETWORK), THE
VERSION OF AFRTS WHICH OPERATES IN THIS COUNTRY, DOES
SO UNDER NO AGREEMENT WHATEVER WITH THE HOST COUNTRY.

2. UNTIL JULY 1976 ALL RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING
IN ITALY WAS A MONOPOLY OF THE STATE NETWORK, THE RAI.
RAI'S RADIO MONOPOLY ENDED THEN BY DECISION OF THE
ITALIAN SUPREME COURT AND A HOST OF PRIVATE RADIO
STATIONS SPRANG UP. THESE ARE SINGLE RADIO STATIONS,
HOWEVER; NETWORK OPERATIONS REMAIN THE EXCLUSIVE PROVINCE
OF RAI. SEN HAS ALL THE ATTRIBUTES OF A NETWORK (ALTH-
OUGH WE HAVE STOPPED CALLING IT THAT) AND HENCE IS PROBABLY
IN VIOLATION OF THE LAW. THERE ARE OTHER PROVISIONS IN
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THE ITALIAN REGULATIONS GOVERNING RADIO TRANS-
MISSION WHICH TRANSGRESSES SEN AS WELL.

3. THUS FAR THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, AND RAI, HAVE
CHOSEN TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY AT OUR RADIO BROADCASTING
SYSTEM. THEY KNOW OF ITS EXISTENCE, ALTHOUGH NOT IN
THE DETAIL ONE WOULD EXPECT AFTER SEN'S THREE DECADES

OF LIFE.

4. THE EMBASSY AND THE U.S. MILITARY IN ITALY HAVE BEEN SEEKING, IN CONVERSATIONS STRETCHING BACK OVER MANY YEARS, TO REGULARIZE SEN'S STATUS. WE HAVE ARGUED THAT IT OUGHT TO RECEIVE A PLACE IN THE ITALIAN MILITARY RADIO BAND. THE ARGUMENT HAS NOT BEEN ACCEPTED. RECENTLY, SEN'S TRANSMITTER AT CAMP DARBY (NEAR LIVORNO) WAS ORDERED TO CEASE BROADCASTING WITHIN FIVE DAYS BY THE FLORENCE BRANCH OF THE MINISTRY OF POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS. THE EMBASSY HAS STALLED THAT ORDER BY REFERRING THE ISSUE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY BUREAUCRACY. STILL, WE THINK IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT OTHER CHALLENGES TO SEN'S CONTINUANCE WILL COME ALONG.

5. THE LINE WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY TAKEN WITH ALL ITALIAN AUTHORITIES IN DISCUSSING SEN IS GROUNDED IN MILITARY NECESSITY; VIS., SEN IS THE U.S. MILITARY'S RECALL SYSTEM, OFTEN THE ONLY MODE OF COMMUNICATIONS IT HAS WITH TROOPS AND DEPENDENTS IN CERTAIN OF OUR INSTALLATIONS. WE HAVE ALSO POINTED OUT HOW IMPORTANT U.S. BROADCASTING IS TO THE MORALE OF OUR PERSONNEL, ALTHOUGH THAT HAS NOT CARRIED MUCH WEIGHT WITH THE ITALIANS. THESE ARE OUR ONLY PLAUSIBLE ARGUMENTS, GIVEN THE LEGAL LIMBO IN WHICH SEN FUNCTIONS.

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6. WITH THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IN MIND, WE FEEL SURE THAT THE DEPARTMENTS WILL AGREE THAT CARRYING COMMERCIALS ON SEN WILL NOT STRENGTHEN THOSE ARGUMENTS. BEFORE MAKING SEN SELF-SUPPORTING, IT NEEDS A LEGAL BASIS FOR EXISTING, AND WE ARE NOT ABLE TO PREDICT WHEN THAT WILL OCCUR. IN SUM, WE ADVISE AGAINST ATTEMPTING TO CONVERT AFRTS IN ITALY TO NON-APPROPRIATED ACTIVITY PRIOR TO REGULARIZING ITS STATUS. GARDNER

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Message Attributes

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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 30-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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TAGS: ETEL, MILI, IT
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